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Our Students. Their Moment.

**New York State Testing Program  
Grade 3 Common Core  
English Language Arts Test**

**Released Questions with Annotations**

**August 2013**

# Copycat Elephants

*by Michael Thai*

## What do elephants and parrots have in common?

- 1 You may have seen a talking parrot on a TV show, in a movie, or even in someone's home. The parrot has learned to copy sounds that people make. Birds are not the only animals that can copy the noises they hear. Dolphins, bats, and some apes also mimic sounds. Now we can add elephants to this list of copycats.
- 2 Dr. Joyce H. Poole is a zoologist. She studies the sounds of elephants. While she was in Kenya, she would hear strange noises made by Mlaika after sunset. Mlaika was a 10-year-old African elephant.
- 3 Mlaika lived near a highway. Dr. Poole says, "I could not tell the difference between Mlaika's call and the distant truck noise." She and other scientists studied Mlaika's sounds. It turned out that Mlaika was copying the sounds of the trucks driving by.

## Chirping Elephants

- 4 "Mlaika was not the only copycat elephant," Dr. Poole says. Calimero is a 23-year-old male African elephant. He spent 18 years with two female Asian elephants. Asian elephants make chirping sounds to talk with one another. African elephants usually do not make chirping sounds. But Calimero now does. He is copying his Asian elephant friends.
- 5 Only a few other mammals, such as bats, dolphins, and humans, have learned to copy noises around them. Many of them seem to copy the sounds of friends to create a special bond.
- 6 Dr. Poole says that elephants, too, need to form bonds with their family and friends. She says, "They make sounds to communicate with each other. When they are separated, they use sound to keep in contact."

### What is a mammal?

A mammal is an animal that has hair on its body and makes milk to feed its young.

- 7        Why would Mlaika copy trucks that she heard going by on the highway?  
Animals that are able to mimic sounds may enjoy practicing new sounds.  
When they are kept outside of their natural environment, they may copy  
unusual sounds. That may be why an elephant would copy the sound of a  
truck.
- 8        Parrots, dolphins, humans, and elephants show that being a copycat is  
one way that animals and people make new friends and keep old ones.

Which detail about Mlaika helps explain the strange sounds she was making?

- A** She was an African elephant.
- B** She lived in Kenya.
- C** She lived near a highway.
- D** She was ten years old.

**Key: C**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.3.1**

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.3.1:**

This question measures RI.3.1 because it asks students to use information in the text to answer a question that is central to understanding the article. A central understanding in this article is how elephants learn to copy the sounds surrounding them. To answer correctly, students must determine what the strange sounds are, why the elephants copy sounds, and the likely source of the sound being copied.

#### **WHY CHOICE “C” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “C” show an understanding of why Mlaika makes strange sounds. “C” is supported by 3 pieces of information in the passage. Immediately following the statement that Mlaika lived near a highway, Dr. Poole says, “I could not tell the difference between Mlaika’s call and the distant truck noise.” Then the article indicates, “Mlaika was copying the sounds of the trucks driving by.” Later, the first and last sentences in paragraph 7 repeat the idea that Mlaika was copying truck sounds. Since the strange sounds were “truck sounds,” then her location near a highway was the reason for those sounds.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

Choice A: Students may have chosen “A” because Mlaika was an African elephant, as was Calimero. Since they both are included in the article as examples of “copycat elephants,” students may conclude that the sounds they make are due to them being the same type of elephant. This conclusion however is contradicted by the fact that Calimero copied different sounds than Mlaika. Calimero copied Asian elephants and Mlaika copied the sound of trucks in the distance. As a result, this choice may offer some insight into her ability to copy sounds, but it does not explain the sounds she was making.

Choice B: Students may have chosen “B” because Mlaika did live in Kenya, and that is where Dr. Poole heard her making the sounds. Students who select this choice, however, may be taking two true statements (Mlaika was observed in Kenya and Mlaika made strange sounds) and making an unsupported connection. The article says that Dr. Poole was in Kenya, so that explains why she heard Mlaika’s sounds, but not why Mlaika was making them.

Choice D: Students may have chosen “D” because the article describes Mlaika as being 10 years old, and Calimero is said to be 23. Since they make different sounds, a student could incorrectly connect their age to the sounds they make. This is contradicted by the information in the article, which reinforces the idea in several places that animals copy nearby sounds. There is no connection, stated or implied, between the age of the elephants and the sounds they make.

### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.3.1**

While all of the choices of this question contain details from the article which make them plausible, choice “C” provides support for the idea that elephants can copy sounds that they hear. To help student succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students’ capacity to comprehend grade-level complex texts and how main ideas are supported with relevant details throughout a text. Students can practice finding textual details that support claims and other important ideas found in a text.

Which paragraph in the article shows how people are **most** like the animals?

- A** paragraph 2
- B** paragraph 3
- C** paragraph 5
- D** paragraph 7

**Key: C**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.3.1**

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.3.1:**

This question measures RI.3.1 because it asks students to identify the location of material in the text that compares people and animals. To answer correctly, students must determine what animals and humans have in common and where in the article this commonality is indicated.

#### **WHY CHOICE “C” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “C” show an understanding that paragraph 5 accurately compares humans to animals. The first sentence in paragraph 5 mentions humans as a mammal with the ability to copy sounds around them. This corresponds to the earlier information that shows that Mlaika and Calimero copy sounds. In addition, the first sentence includes bats and dolphins when talking about mammals that can copy sounds. The second sentence shows another similarity by stating, “many of them seem to copy the sounds of friends,” which connects to the description of Calimero copying his “Asian elephant friends.”

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

Choice A: Students may have chosen “A” may because paragraph 2 refers to Dr. Joyce H. Poole, who studies the sounds of animals. Students who choose “A” might incorrectly conclude that one individual is representative of all humans and confuse her observation of animals with behaving like them.

Choice B: Students may have chosen “B” because paragraph 3 provides evidence of the interaction between humans and an animal. “Other scientists” are mentioned, which broadens the scope of the interaction. The student who chooses this response recognizes that one individual is not sufficient evidence of a similarity, but ignores that the paragraph is about people’s observations and not their characteristics.

Choice D: Students may have chosen “D” because paragraph 7 is entirely about Mlaika and the sounds she and other animals copy. Paragraph 7 does not state or imply any comparison between animals and humans. A student who selects this response demonstrates a loose understanding of the similarity, but does not correctly refer to the text as the basis for the comparison.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.3.1**

While all of the choices of this question refer to paragraphs that include details either about humans and/or animals, only paragraph 5 accurately compares humans to animals. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students’ capacity to comprehend texts of grade-level complexity and understand any comparisons that are included in texts, while referring explicitly to the text as the basis for that understanding.

Which detail best supports the article's main idea?

- A** Parrots copy human sounds.
- B** People copy sounds and noises.
- C** Mlaika is one of the elephants that copy sounds.
- D** Dr. Joyce H. Poole studies mammals that copy sounds.

**Key: C**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.3.1; RI.3.2**

**RI.3.1:** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

**RI.3.2:** Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.3.1 and RI.3.2:**

This question measures RI.3.1 and RI.3.2 because it asks students to correctly identify the main idea of the article in order to indicate a detail that supports it. To answer correctly, students must use a process that goes beyond basic comprehension to assess a deeper level of knowledge. Students must first determine the main idea of the article, elephants and their ability to copy sounds that they hear, in order to select a detail that supports it.

**WHY CHOICE "C" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "C" show an understanding of the main idea and are able to select a detail that supports it. Elephants and the sounds they make are discussed beginning with the title ("Copycat Elephants") and in all but one paragraph. Even paragraph 5, which does not mention an elephant, implies a comparison to the animal. As a result, the main idea must have to do with elephants and sounds. A closer reading reveals that the article focuses on how elephants copy sounds that they hear. Once this is determined, the only choice that contains a detail that supports that idea is choice "C" with its use of Mlaika as an example of this ability.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students may have chosen "A" because parrots are the first animal mentioned in the article known for copying sounds. Not until the last paragraph are they mentioned again, and then only as one of a list of four animals. The article is about mammals that copy sounds, and focuses specifically on elephants. Since parrots are birds, they are used to introduce the unknown by comparing it to what is likely known.

**Choice B:** Students may have chosen "B" because people, as interested observers and known sound copiers, are referenced throughout the article. These references, however, are not central to the ideas in the text. In the case of Dr. Poole, the human is shown as the researcher of sounds. In other cases, humans are used to compare with the elephants who copy sounds.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen "D" because Dr. Poole is used as an authority for information in the article, and as such, background is included to explain her credibility. It is possible that a student who selects this choice may be able to correctly identify the main idea, but unable to recognize support for it. It is also possible that the student might select this response because of incorrectly concluding that the focus of the article is Dr. Poole rather than the animals she studies.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.3.1 and RI.3.4:**

While all of the choices of this question contain details found in the article, choice “C” provides the detail that best supports the main idea. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students’ capacity to comprehend grade-level complex texts and developing the ability to go beyond correctly identifying a main idea and to correctly recognizing textual details that support a main idea.



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# Greeting the Sun, A Maushop Story

*retold by Joseph Bruchac*

- 1 Long ago, as the Sun traveled across the sky, one of the first places he came to each morning was the land of the Wampanoag people. He would shine down on them, giving them warmth and light. But instead of thanking him for what he gave them, the Wampanoag people would look up into the sky, squint their eyes, and cover their faces with their hands.
- 2 “I do not like those little people making faces at me,” said the Sun one day. “I will no longer visit their land. I will stay on the other side of the sky, where the people appreciate me.”
- 3 So, when the next day came, the Sun did not rise up in the sky. Everything in the land of the Wampanoag people stayed dark and cold. The people became afraid and began to cry out.
- 4 “Someone help us,” they cried. “Everything is dark. The Sun is missing. The world is going to end.”
- 5 Maushop, the giant, had been sleeping, but the sound of many frightened voices woke him.
- 6 “Hunh,” Maushop said. “It is dark.”
- 7 Maushop stood up from the place where he had been sleeping on the beach, just below the great cliffs at Gay Head. He saw the little fires burning in the village of the Wampanoag people. Walking very carefully, so that he would not step on anyone in the darkness, Maushop went into the village.
- 8 “Maushop,” the people cried. “You must help us. The Sun did not rise today. How can we survive without the Sun?”
- 9 “I will go and find the Sun,” Maushop said.
- 10 Maushop turned and stepped into the ocean. He began to wade toward the east. His legs were so long that it took him only four steps to cross the

ocean and four more steps to come to the other side of the world. There Maushop saw the Sun sitting in the middle of the sky and not moving.

11 “Older Brother,” Maushop called up to the Sun, “why are you here? It is long past the time for you to bring the new day to the other side of the world. The people there are in darkness, and they are afraid.”

12 “I am glad to see you, Younger Brother,” said the Sun. “But as for those people on the other side of the world, I am not going there anymore. They never said thank you when I gave them light and warmth. All they did was squint their eyes and make ugly faces. I am going to stay here, where the people appreciate me.”

13 Maushop turned and walked back across the ocean to the land of the Wampanoag people. He told the people what the Sun had said.

14 “If the Sun returns,” the people promised, “we will greet him every morning. We will smile up at him and say thanks to him every day.”

15 Maushop turned and walked back to the other side of the world.

16 “Older Brother,” Maushop said to the Sun, “the people on my side of the world are sorry. They want you to return. They promise that they will greet you with smiles and words of thanks every morning.”

17 “No,” said the Sun. “I do not think they will remember what they promised. I will stay here. I will not move.”

18 Maushop decided that he would have to show the Sun that the people really meant what they said. Maushop went to the spiders.

19 “My friends,” said Maushop, “I need a big net. Will you weave it for me?”

20 “We will do as you ask,” the spiders answered. They wove a huge net that was very strong.

21 Maushop picked up the net and went back to the Sun.

22 “Older Brother,” Maushop said, “I want you to see that the people on the other side of the world meant what they said. You do not have to move. I will move you.”

23 Then Maushop threw that great net over the Sun. He grabbed the ends of the net in his hands, put it over his shoulder, and dragged the Sun back across the sky. Maushop was so strong that the Sun could not resist him.

24 As soon as they reached the land of the Wampanoags, the Sun heard voices calling up to him.

- 25        “Thank you,” the voices called. “Thank you for bringing us light and warmth. Thank you for the gift of another day.”
- 26        The Sun looked down at all of the people. They were not making ugly faces anymore. They were smiling up at him.
- 27        “Younger Brother,” said the Sun to Maushop, “you were right. The people on this side of the world are happy to see me. From now on, as long as they greet me this way, I will come to their land every day.”

Which sentence suggests that the Sun feels it is a bad idea to trust the Wampanoag people?

- A** “ ‘I do not like those little people making faces at me,’ said the Sun one day.” (paragraph 2)
- B** “So, when the next day came, the Sun did not rise up in the sky.” (paragraph 3)
- C** “But as for those people on the other side of the world, I am not going there anymore.” (paragraph 12)
- D** “I do not think they will remember what they promised.” (paragraph 17)

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.4.3:**

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.4.3:**

This question measures RL.4.3 because it asks students to select textual evidence that describes a character’s feelings, in this case the Sun’s feeling that it is a bad idea to trust the Wampanoag people. To answer correctly, students must follow a character’s developing thoughts and feelings as they are connected to the plot and as the story arc progresses.

**WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” show an understanding of the point in the narrative where the Sun reveals his distrust of the Wampanoag people. Maushop has asked the Sun to shine on the Wampanoag people assuring the Sun that he will be greeted with smiles and words of thanks every morning. The Sun is unconvinced. He believes the Wampanoags will not remember their promise, indicating distrust.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Answer Choice A:** Students may have chosen “A” because it expresses a negative emotion. The Sun does not like the Wampanoag people because they make faces at him. This action might cause distrust but in the context of this narrative, the action more clearly causes dislike and leads to the Sun’s withdrawal from the Wampanoag people, not distrust of them. In tracing the developing and changing feelings of the Sun toward the Wampanoag people, this textual evidence supports an emotion occurring before the Sun expresses distrust.

**Answer Choice B:** Students may have chosen “B” because it expresses a negative reaction based on already present negative feelings. At this point in the narrative, the Sun has chosen to react to the Wampanoag people by no longer shining down upon them. However, the primary emotion expressed in this option is revenge, not distrust.

**Answer Choice C:** Students may have chosen “C” because it strongly expresses a negative emotion and conveys the Sun’s refusal to shine on the Wampanoag people. The statement suggests that the Sun’s decision is final and caused by hurt feelings. However, at this point in the story, the Sun is explaining to Maushop his decision and the reasons for it. The Sun has yet to express his distrust of the Wampanoag people.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.4.3:**

While all of the choices of this question are plausible for expressing negative emotions and a step in the progression of the Sun's feelings for the Wampanoag people, only "D" pinpoints the moment in the narrative when the Sun reveals his distrust of the Wampanoags and his belief that they will not remember the promise Maushop has conveyed. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on a character's development over the course of a story, specifically identifying how details in the story affect a character's actions, words, thoughts, and feelings.

Which is the **best** summary of this story?

- A** Maushop lives near the Wampanoag people. He goes to talk to the Sun on the other side of the world. The Sun calls Maushop his younger brother. Maushop is also friends with the spiders. The spiders weave a net for Maushop to use.
- B** The Sun leaves the land of the Wampanoag people because he is not happy with them. When the Sun does not come back, the people turn to Maushop for help. He finds the Sun on the other side of the world and finds out why the Sun will not come back. When the people say they will change their ways, Maushop finds a way to get the Sun to return.
- C** The Sun and Maushop are friends. When the Sun leaves the land of the Wampanoag people, they ask Maushop to help get the Sun to come back. Maushop makes two trips to the other side of the world.
- D** When the Sun leaves the land of the Wampanoag people, they want him to come back. They need help to find out where the Sun went. Maushop agrees to go look for the Sun and tell him that the people want him to come back. Maushop is able to do this because he is a giant and can travel around the world quickly.

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.4.2:**

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.4.2:**

This questions measure RL.4.2 because it asks students to identify the best summary of a story. A summary should be short and include the key elements of the story's plot including the exposition, details about the main character, and a clear description of the conflict and its resolution. Summaries should not include any details that are too specific or unnecessary, as well as inaccurate inferences or conclusions.

**WHY CHOICE "B" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "B" show an understanding of the key elements of the story. This choice begins by focusing on the Sun, bringing in the Wampanoag people as the antagonist and describing Maushop's role in helping the Wampanoag people. The degree of emphasis on the various characters, events, and problems in this summary mirrors that of the story as well.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** This option includes several elements of the story that are important to the progression of events. Maushop and his relationship to the Wampanoag people, the Sun, and the net the spiders weave are central to the resolution of the story. However, option "A" leaves out key components of the plot such as elements of the exposition and a clear description of the conflict and its resolution, as well as details about the main character, the Sun. Finally, this choice focuses too heavily on Maushop and not the main character, the Sun.

**Choice C:** This option states the main conflict, but does not include a resolution. In addition, minor details such as the number of trips Maushop makes to the other side of the world and the inaccurate description of Maushop and the Sun's sibling relationship as a "friendship" are unnecessarily included.

**Choice D:** This option describes the basic conflict of the story and some elements of its resolution. However, in place of an explicit description of the resolution is an extraneous and unnecessary explanation of the reason why Maushop is able to travel around the world.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.4.2:**

While all of the choices of this question contain some key elements of the high quality summary, only choice “B” evenly and thoroughly includes the essential elements of this narrative. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on identifying the following components of plot necessary for accurate summaries, such as: important background information the setting and/or main character, details about the main character, and a clear description of the conflict and its resolution. Students can then practice including these in succinct, written summaries with other texts read in class.



Read these sentences from paragraph 23 of the story.

**He grabbed the ends of the net in his hands, put it over his shoulder, and dragged the Sun back across the sky. Maushop was so strong that the Sun could not resist him.**

What does the word “resist” mean in these lines?

- A** offer to protect
- B** shine back at
- C** fight against
- D** care for

**Key: C**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.4.4:**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.4.4:**

This question measures RL.4.4 because it asks students to determine the meaning of a word as it is used in the story. To answer correctly, students must determine the meaning of “resist” through any number of ways such as by using knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and root words, knowledge of related words, or through textual context. Then, students must show an ability to understand the meaning of the word well enough to eliminate other options.

#### **WHY CHOICE “C” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “C” show an understanding that “fight against” is the best understanding of “resist” in the context of these lines. That the Sun is fighting against Maushop is apparent with clues like “so strong,” “dragged,” and “back across.” The meaning of these words and phrases suggests the Sun’s reluctance and lack of cooperation. The sentence, “He grabbed the ends of the net...put it over his shoulder, and dragged the Sun” describes a situation where someone is resisting or fighting back. Finally “dragged the Sun back across the sky” indicates Maushop is taking the Sun over a path the Sun has gone before, a repetition that adds to the idea of reluctance, resistance, and fighting against making “C” the best choice.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students may have chosen “A” as a result of a misinterpretation of how the Sun feels about being dragged across the sky and back to the Wampanoag people. A student selecting this choice might think Maushop needs protection from the Sun, the spiders, or the Wampanoag people when in fact Maushop is the character taking charge and making amends between the Wampanoags and the Sun.

**Choice B:** Students may have chosen “B” because the Sun is responding to Maushop by shining. However, “shine back at” fails to indicate the nature of the Sun’s response: negative or positive. In this case it is a negative response due to the Sun being dragged against his will by a much stronger Maushop.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen “D” because Maushop has found the Sun and is now dragging him back to the Wampanoag people because he cares for them. However, this situation is describing the interaction between Maushop and the Sun, which is one where the Sun is being forced to return.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.4.4**

While all of the choices of this question explain possible reactions from the Sun, only choice “C” accurately describes the idea that the Sun is being forcefully brought back to the Wampanoag. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on how students can use prefixes, suffixes, root words, knowledge of related words, and/or determination through textual context to find the meaning of unknown words in a story.

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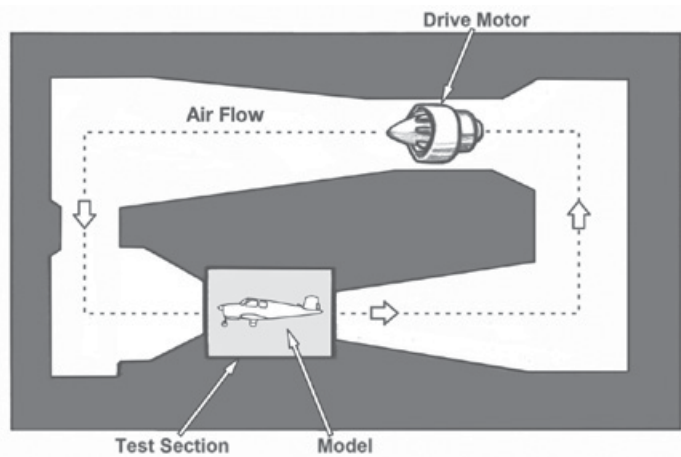
## What Are Wind Tunnels?

*by David Hitt*

- 1 Wind tunnels are large tubes with air moving inside. The tunnels are used to copy the actions of an object in flight. Researchers use wind tunnels to learn more about how an aircraft will fly. NASA uses wind tunnels to test scale models of aircraft and spacecraft. Some wind tunnels are big enough to hold full-size versions of vehicles. The wind tunnel moves air around an object, making it seem like the object is really flying.

### How do Wind Tunnels Work?

- 2 Most of the time, powerful fans move air through the tube. The object to be tested is fastened in the tunnel so that it will not move. The object can be a small model of a vehicle. It can be just a piece of a vehicle. It can be a full-size aircraft or spacecraft. It can even be a common object like a tennis ball. The air moving around the still object shows what would happen if the object were moving through the air. How the air moves can be studied in different ways. Smoke or dye can be placed in the air and can be seen as it moves. Threads can be attached to the object to show how the air is moving. Special instruments are often used to measure the force of the air on the object.

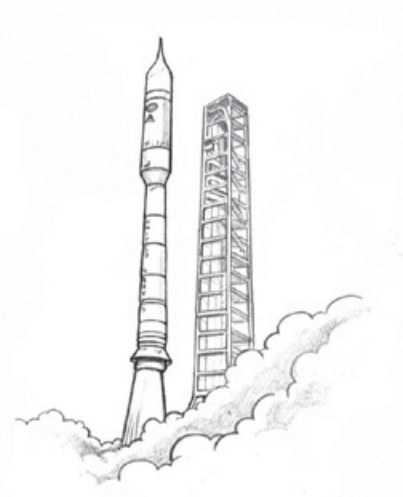


### How Does NASA Use Wind Tunnels for Aircraft?

- 3 NASA has more wind tunnels than any other group. The agency uses the wind tunnels in a lot of ways. One of the main ways NASA uses wind tunnels is to learn more about airplanes and how things move through the air. One of NASA's jobs is to improve air transportation. Wind tunnels help NASA test ideas for ways to make aircraft better and safer. Engineers can test new materials or shapes for airplane parts. Then, before flying a new airplane, NASA will test it in a wind tunnel to make sure it will fly as it should.
- 4 NASA also works with others that need to use wind tunnels. That way, companies that are building new airplanes can test how the planes will fly. By letting these companies use the wind tunnels, NASA helps to make air travel safer.

## How Can Wind Tunnels Help Spacecraft?

- 5 NASA also uses wind tunnels to test spacecraft and rockets. These vehicles are made to operate in space. Space has no atmosphere. Spacecraft and rockets have to travel through the atmosphere to get to space. Vehicles that take humans into space also must come back through the atmosphere to Earth.
- 6 Wind tunnels have been important in making the Ares rockets and Orion spacecraft. Ares and Orion are vehicles that will take astronauts into space. NASA engineers tested ideas for the design of Ares in wind tunnels. They needed to see how well Ares would fly. Engineers tested Orion models. They needed to know what would happen to different designs when the spacecraft came back through the atmosphere.
- 7 Long after the first design work is finished, NASA can still use wind tunnels. Wind tunnel tests have helped NASA change the space shuttle to make it safer. Wind tunnels will keep helping make all spacecraft and rockets better.
- 8 Wind tunnels can even help engineers design spacecraft to work on other worlds. Mars has a thin atmosphere. It is important to know what the Martian atmosphere will do to vehicles that are landing there. Spacecraft designs and parachutes are tested in wind tunnels set up to be like the Martian atmosphere.
- 9 NASA has many different types of wind tunnels. They are located at NASA centers all around the country. The wind tunnels come in a lot of sizes. Some are only a few inches square, and some are large enough to test a full-size airplane. Some wind tunnels test aircraft at very slow speeds. But some wind tunnels are made to test at hypersonic speeds. That is more than 4,000 miles per hour!



Which of the following **best** summarizes the main idea of the passage?

- A** “Researchers use wind tunnels to learn more about how an aircraft will fly.” (paragraph 1)
- B** “Special instruments are often used to measure the force of the air on the object.” (paragraph 2)
- C** “NASA engineers tested ideas for the design of Ares in wind tunnels.” (paragraph 6)
- D** “Long after the first design work is finished, NASA can still use wind tunnels.” (paragraph 7)

**Key: A**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.5.2:**

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.5.2:**

This question measures RI.5.2 because it asks the student to analyze specific details from the text to determine which of them best summarizes the main idea of the article. To answer correctly, students must combine their comprehension of the entire text with an analysis of each detail.

#### **WHY CHOICE “A” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “A” are able to identify that the quote includes the main elements of the article—the researchers, wind tunnels, and aircraft—and correctly states the relationship among the three. Each of these elements is supported by specific details and examples throughout the passage.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice B:** Students may have chosen “B” because this sentence does provide important information about how wind tunnels operate, which is essential to understanding their use for a variety of purposes. This, however, is a supporting detail that contributes to an understanding of the article’s focus rather than a general statement of the focus.

**Choice C:** Students may have chosen “C” because this sentence could be seen as support for a main idea of a section. It supports the idea that NASA tests spacecraft by using wind tunnels, so rather than summarizing the main idea of the article, it expands upon information about a specific group that uses wind tunnels.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen “D” because it is a main idea of a paragraph, elaborating on how NASA uses wind tunnels. The sentence develops the variety of wind tunnel uses rather than stating the general main idea. It is too specific to qualify as a summary of the main idea of the passage.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.5.2:**

To arrive at the correct answer, a student must analyze the entire article and determine how each part contributes to the whole. Choices “B,” “C,” and “D” all contribute to that understanding, but none of them alone describe the main idea. Each part of the passage expands upon how different researchers use wind tunnels to test a variety of types of aircraft. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on summarizing texts, attending to the way authors build central ideas with supporting ideas. This skill enables a student to use informational text as a tool for understanding new concepts.

Which key detail helps the reader understand the importance of using wind tunnels?

- A** Wind tunnels can move air more than 4,000 miles per hour.
- B** Wind tunnels are design tools that help make safer aircraft vehicles.
- C** Wind tunnels can create different atmospheres.
- D** Wind tunnels are large tubes that show how air moves.

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.5.2:**

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.5.2:**

This question measures RI.5.2 because it asks students to analyze specific details from the text to determine which of them best supports one of the main ideas of the text. Students must select the detail that highlights the importance of the wind tunnels.

**WHY CHOICE "B" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "B" are able to identify the detail that supports one of the main ideas of the text: the importance of using wind tunnels. The article describes how using wind tunnels is an important part of building and testing aircraft in order to make them safer when used commercially by airlines or by NASA in spaceflight. The safety provided by first testing aircraft wind tunnels is the important detail for students to identify.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students may have chosen "A" because the statement describes an impressive feature of wind tunnels. The statement, however, does not explicitly connect this information to the importance of their use. It is a secondary detail with respect to the content of the passage as a whole.

**Choice C:** Students may have chosen "C" because the statement describes an important feature of wind tunnels. The statement, however, does not explicitly connect this information to the importance of their use. It is a secondary detail with respect to the content of the passage as a whole.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen "D" because the statement defines wind tunnels. The statement, however, does not explicitly connect this definition to the importance of their use. The definition of a wind tunnel is necessary to the article, but it does not explain its contribution to safety.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.5.2:**

To arrive at the correct answer, students must differentiate between supporting information and information that helps describe the overall importance of wind tunnels. Choices "A," "C," and "D" all focus on what wind tunnels are and how they operate. The student must analyze the statements in order to determine that only "B" refers to what is achieved with wind tunnels rather than simply describing them. "D" shows what they are, "C" tells what they can do, and "A" demonstrates their power. By mentioning increased safety, only "B" addresses the importance of the use of wind tunnels. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on attending to the way authors build central ideas with supporting details. Instruction can also focus the way ideas and details relate, which aids general comprehension as well as the ability to understand the importance and use of various types of information within a text.

The statement that “NASA also works with others that need to use wind tunnels” **most strongly** suggests that

- A** many different groups are developing space shuttles
- B** NASA hopes to buy vehicles made by other agencies
- C** NASA has the largest wind tunnels in existence
- D** many companies do not have their own wind tunnels

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.5.1:**

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.5.1:**

This question measures RI.5.1 because it asks students to identify an inference that is supported by a quote from the text. To answer correctly students must understand the quote in the context of the text and determine which inference it most strongly supports. The correct answer is worded so that it does not refer to anything explicitly stated in the paragraph. Students must recognize the valid inference that is implicit in the text.

#### **WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” are able to identify that it makes a valid inference that is supported by the quotation itself as well as the surrounding text. If NASA allows others to use their wind tunnels, it is safe to assume that those others do not have wind tunnels of their own.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Although other groups could possibly develop space shuttles, the passage talks at length about the idea that wind tunnels are used for a variety of purposes and not just space shuttles. It also states that some of the “companies” to which NASA lends its wind tunnels are “building airplanes.” This information makes it more likely that these other groups are doing other things rather than building space shuttles.

**Choice B:** This choice suggests that NASA will benefit for loaning out its wind tunnels. The passage, however, only refers to what NASA provides and mentions the “others” in general terms. The reader is not told what the other companies make or if their products could be of benefit to NASA. The benefit is “safer” air travel.

**Choice C:** The large size of NASA’s wind tunnels can certainly be inferred, but to conclude that they are “the largest in existence” requires making a broad generalization from limited information. It is possible that NASA’s wind tunnels are the largest in the world, but the information in the passage does not necessarily support that conclusion. This also assumes that only companies needing the largest wind tunnels need to use NASA’s facilities, a point that the text does not support.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.5.1:**

This question measures a student’s ability to recognize an inference that is based on the information in a passage. While choice “C” may be tempting to conclude, the statement is much too broad to be inferred from the passage. Choices “A” and “B” rely on information in the passage but then extend that information beyond the support that is provided. Choice “D” is the only specific inference that can be supported by limiting evidence to the statements provided about NASA and the companies with whom they work. If they had their own wind tunnels, they would not need to use those at NASA. To help students succeed with questions like this,



instruction could focus on students' comprehension of grade-level complex texts and gaining the ability to make inferential claims based on specific details in texts.

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**New York State Testing Program  
Grade 6 Common Core  
English Language Arts Test**

**Released Questions with Annotations**

**August 2013**

## Snow Way

by Beth Geiger

Where will you find the world's best spot for stargazing? Many astronomers would say the South Pole. The sky is always clear there, and during the winter it's always dark.

Astronomers flock to the South Pole, as do scientists who study climate, the atmosphere, and polar ice. To accommodate them, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) built an outpost, called the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

Getting people and supplies to the station is not easy. Military transport planes do it when weather permits. Therefore, the NSF is building a "highway" to the pole. The project is one of the most unusual road-construction projects ever undertaken.

### Top of the Bottom

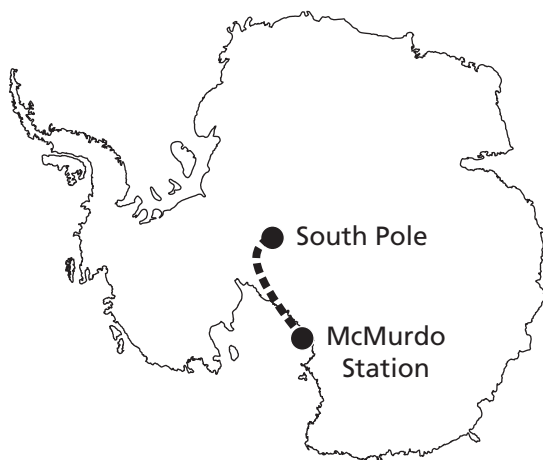
The Antarctic highway, called the South Pole Traverse, will not be a typical thoroughfare. "Everyone knows what a road looks like," said Peter West, an NSF spokesman. "What we are working on is not that at all, by any stretch of the imagination."

When completed, the traverse will be a 1,600-kilometer (1,000-mile) path of groomed snow and ice, marked by green flags. It will cross floating ice, gaping *crevasses* (cracks in the ice), deep snow, treacherous mountains, and frozen nothingness.

The traverse is not a typical road, because Antarctica is not a typical continent. Ice—4,570 meters (15,000 feet) thick in some places—covers 98 percent of the continent. Antarctica is the world's coldest desert and receives only about 5 centimeters (2 inches) of precipitation (rain or snow) annually. The thick ice is the buildup of millions of years' worth of snowfall.

A few high peaks in the Transantarctic Mountains poke through the ice to form islands of rock called *nunataks*. East of the Transantarctic chain is the *polar plateau*—the flat top of the bottom of the world. On the plateau lies the Amundsen-Scott Station.

Antarctica's ice doesn't stop at the edge of the continent. Thick slabs of floating, slowly shifting ice, called *ice shelves*, fringe the continent. The biggest, the Ross Ice Shelf, is the size of France and is hundreds of feet thick.



■■■■ = Antarctic highway

## Ice Route

The traverse begins at McMurdo Station, the main U.S. base on the continent. From there, it heads across the Ross Ice Shelf.

35 Floating, shifting ice might seem like dangerous ground for heavy truck traffic. Why not go straight over the land instead? Traveling across the Ross Ice Shelf keeps the journey at the relative warmth of sea level for as long as possible. At higher elevations on land, temperatures can get so cold that they cause machinery to malfunction. The shelf also makes for relatively easy cruising. “It’s really smooth and flat,” said Erin Pettit, a University of Washington geologist who works in Antarctica.

## Frigid Summers

40 Building the traverse has been a daunting job. A hardy five-man crew works only during the Antarctic summer (December to March). Even then, temperatures remain well below freezing. “At first, it is strange for anybody to work in the cold-cold like that,” said project manager John Wright. “But you learn to deal.”

45 The first summer, the crew members tackled their most chilling challenge: yawning crevasses in the Ross Ice Shelf that can swallow a tractor in the blink of a frozen eyelash. The crevasses, which can be 30 meters (100 feet) deep, might not be so dangerous if they were visible. But most of them lurk under covers of snow called *snow bridges*. Many people have fallen through snow bridges to icy deaths.

50 The nastiest crevasses on the route are in a *shear zone* about 48 kilometers (30 miles) from McMurdo. There, ice within the shelf moves at different rates, stretching and cracking into a maze of crevasses. To cross that area safely, the team members probed the ice ahead with radar. Whenever they found a crevasse, they used a bulldozer to fill it in with snow. Then they inched across.

55 During the last construction phase, the crew worked for 66 straight days. After filling crevasses in the shear zone, the team bogged<sup>1</sup> down in a 260-kilometer (160-mile) stretch of deep snow on the shelf. The biggest surprise, remembers Wright, was any  
60 *good* day. “We had two last year,” he said.



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<sup>1</sup>**bogged:** to sink or get stuck

How does the author show that the Ross Ice Shelf is dangerous?

- A** by explaining that some crevasses are hidden
- B** by giving the locations of the worst crevasses
- C** by telling about a truck getting stuck in the snow
- D** by describing how the crew used bulldozers

**Key: A**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.6.3:**

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.6.3:**

This question measures RI.6.3 because it asks students to analyze how a key idea in the text is elaborated. Students must use details from the text to choose which information is the most relevant to the key idea, as well as the manner in which the author connects the details to the idea.

#### **WHY CHOICE "A" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "A" show an understanding of being able to track the development of the danger of the Ross Ice Shelf across several details throughout the text. The author first suggests that the Ross Ice Shelf is possibly dangerous for heavy trucks due to the floating, shifting ice, but not as much of a risk factor to the trucks as the higher elevations on land. Later in the passage, the extent of the potential danger is portrayed as crew members' "most chilling challenge: yawning crevasses that can swallow a tractor" quickly. The author goes on to explain that the crevasses "might not be so dangerous if they were visible." The students must analyze this evidence to determine that this connection is the most important factor relating to the key idea and is clearly the correct answer.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice B:** Students may have chosen "B" because the author does give the location of "the nastiest crevasses on the route" and explains how the ice in that shear zone "moves at different rates, stretching and cracking into a maze of crevasses." The location itself does not show that the Ross Ice Shelf is dangerous, although it gives an example of part of the shelf on which crew members needed to probe safely. The other depth and length specifications in the passage relate to crevasses in general and to a stretch in the shear zone in which the team became stuck while filling crevasses. A student who has selected this option has not correctly differentiated aspects of the key idea nor evaluated the relevance and connection of the evidence.

**Choice C:** Students may have chosen "C" because the author tells the anecdote of a time when "after filling crevasses in the shear zone, the team bogged down" in a stretch of deep snow on the shelf. The students may infer that it was a dangerous situation for the crew members; however, the author does not connect this detail to the key idea per se. Its purpose is to provide an example of how the majority of the crew's work was fraught with challenges, and "the biggest surprise...was any good day." The inherent danger in working with crevasses existed at all times, yet this particular situation is a less relevant piece of evidence connecting the author's portrayal that the Ross Ice Shelf and does not reflect the overall concept. The student who selects this option has not accurately analyzed how the key idea of danger is elaborated in the whole of the text.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen "D" because the author describes how a bulldozer was used to fill in large crevasses in order to cross them safely. The example provides a solution to the problem of working on potentially dangerous areas located on the Ross Ice Shelf; however, like answer choice "B," it does not show

that the shelf itself is dangerous. A student who selects this option has not correctly analyzed the relevance and purpose of this evidence in relation to the conveyance of the key idea.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.6.3:**

To arrive at the correct answer, the student must determine the type and relevancy of the evidence as it connects to the idea the author is elaborating. Choices “B” and “D” provide examples of specific dangerous locations and techniques used to avoid danger, and “C” is an anecdote of a possibly dangerous situation. None of these accurately show the idea that the shelf as a whole is dangerous. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction could focus on delineating the development of ideas across complex texts. Students can make and analyze connections among various details, explaining how authors have related and used them to develop complex points and claims.

Which sentence would be **most** important to include in a summary of the article?

- A** Many scientists perform research at the South Pole because the skies are always clear and in the winter, always dark, making the South Pole ideal for stargazing.
- B** Scientists set up a station at the South Pole for studying the climate, stars, atmosphere, and polar ice.
- C** Building a road to a scientific station at the South Pole was a difficult task with many dangers, like cold weather and deep crevasses.
- D** Construction of a road for travel to the South Pole could only be done in the summer months.

**Key: C**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.6.2:**

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.6.2:**

This question measures RI.6.2 because it asks students to identify which information is most important to include in a summary. Students have to identify how particular details can be synthesized to construct a comprehensive summary.

**WHY CHOICE C IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “C” show an understanding of the passage as a whole, but also how summaries are constructed. This statement synthesizes important information that is developed across the text. It includes the location (the South Pole), the basic task (building a road), the complications (difficulty and danger), and begins to elaborate them (cold weather and deep crevasses). A synthetic sentence like this would be essential for summarizing this text.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who chose “A” recognize that one reason scientists flock to Antarctica is to study the cosmos. This detail, however, is relatively discrete and minor for a summary of the passage.

**Choice B:** Students who chose “B” recognize that scientists must set up accommodations in which to live. This detail, however, is relatively discrete and minor for a summary of the passage.

**Choice D:** Students who chose “D” recognize that the ice route is a main focus but this statement does not make the connections between the ideal summer months and the adverse and difficult conditions they help mitigate. Such connections would make this statement more useful for a summary.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.6.2:**

Choices “A” and “B” are plausible because they mention an aspect of the scientists’ reason for being in Antarctica. However, they do not recognize that the main focus of the article is the ice route that will cross the continent. Choice “D” is plausible because it recognizes the main focus of the article, but it is too generally stated. Choice “C” is the only statement that includes and synthesizes multiple key ideas of the text. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing the relative importance of various details in texts. Students can also work on developing and evaluating summaries of texts or smaller sections of extended texts they are reading.

Read this sentence from lines 12 and 13.

**When completed, the traverse will be a 1,600-kilometer (1,000-mile) path of groomed snow and ice, marked by green flags.**

Which claim from the article is **best** supported by this sentence?

- A** “Astronomers flock to the South Pole...” (line 3)
- B** “The project is one of the most unusual road-construction projects ever undertaken.” (lines 7 and 8)
- C** “Antarctica’s ice doesn’t stop at the edge of the continent.” (line 29)
- D** “...temperatures can get so cold that they cause machinery to malfunction.” (line 37)

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RI.6.8:**

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.6.8**

This question measures RI.6.8 because it asks students to consider multiple claims from the text and identify which claim is supported by a specific piece of evidence from the article.

#### **WHY CHOICE B IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “B” show an understanding of the relationship between one of the major claims the text makes and a key piece of evidence used to support it. Much of the text is devoted to developing the claim expressed in “B” regarding the unique nature of the project. The sentence from lines 12 and 13 succinctly and powerfully expresses features that make this important “thoroughfare” “unusual.” Most roads requiring the coordinated and sustained effort to build like this one are not “groomed snow and ice, marked by green flags.”

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students may have chosen “A” because this detail does provide a reason why building the road is important. But this is not a claim that is supported by the statement in lines 12 and 13.

**Choice C:** Students may have chosen “C” because this detail does provide an important fact that relates to the construction of the road. But this is not a claim that is supported by the statement in lines 12 and 13.

**Choice D:** Students may have chosen “D” because this detail does provide an important aspect of why the project is difficult. But this is not a claim that is supported by the statement in lines 12 and 13.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RI.6.8:**

Choices “A,” “C,” and “D” are plausible but incorrect options because they mention important aspects of research endeavors in the Antarctic, but they are not claims that are supported by the statement in lines 12 and 13. To answer correctly, students need to understand the meaning of the passage as well as how different pieces of information are related in texts to make and support claims. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how authors use specific details to develop and support claims. Students can also build conceptual understanding by making and supporting their own claims and evaluating those made by their peers or teachers.



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## Earth and Water and Sky

*by Brian Bushemi*

It was a long hike through the woods to the Thinking Pond, but David Brenner didn't mind. He'd been going there for three years, ever since he was ten and had found the lonely, stream-fed pool while exploring one summer afternoon. He liked to spend time there more than he liked doing almost anything else.

5        The other kids thought he was kind of weird for going off into the woods by himself so often. David couldn't understand why he seemed to be the only one who saw how amazing it was for a squirrel to run down a tree head first, or how unique each day's sky full of clouds was. His mom said he was more sensitive and thoughtful than other kids his age, but David just felt lonely and left out most of the time.

10        About a quarter of a mile from the pond, David caught sight of the huge, gnarled oak tree he'd nicknamed the Old Giant for its rough, craggy bark and tall, thick trunk.

15        When he reached the giant tree, David sat down and shrugged off his backpack. He unscrewed the lid from his thermos and thirstily drank the cool, tart juice inside. Then he leaned back against the  
20        wide trunk to rest for a few minutes.

      Today David planned to sketch some interesting fallen trees near the Thinking Pond.

25        David stood up and continued toward the Thinking Pond. Suddenly, he heard a sharp, whining sound like the engine of a high-flying jet airplane. It was followed by a *crack!* like a whip being snapped, only a thousand times louder. Then a ball of fire roared overhead, followed by a searing gust of wind.

30        The shock wave knocked David to the ground, his ears ringing. A second later, he heard an explosive, hissing crash up ahead. A rush of air and hot steam billowed through the trees, and he covered his head as it washed over him.



After several minutes, David looked up. The warm, wet mist had dispersed, leaving the woods damp and sparkling with little droplets of water.

35       *What the heck just happened?!* he wondered as he got to his feet. Cautiously but curiously, he headed in the direction of the Thinking Pond. By now David could usually see the shine of sunlight on the gently rippling water, but today something was different. Covering the last hundred yards quickly, David stopped at the edge of the meadow where the pond lay.

40       “Whoa!” he said in amazement. Before him stretched a dry, cracked-mud crater, all that was left of the Thinking Pond. The water in the fifty-foot-diameter pool had evaporated, leaving a huge hole in the forest floor. The baked mud rippled out from the center in wide, shallow waves. In the middle of the crater, half buried in the ground, was a rounded, melted lump of something that looked like rock. It was a little larger than a basketball.

45       “I can’t believe it!” David whispered, awe-struck. “It’s a meteorite!”

It was indeed a meteorite. Amazingly, the extraterrestrial rock had landed almost exactly in the center of the Thinking Pond, its immense heat and force evaporating the water within a split second. But the water had slowed the meteorite down just enough so it hadn’t smashed to pieces when it hit the ground.

50       The wet dirt hissed and popped, then dried and stuck. The meteorite was definitely too hot to touch.

While he waited for it to cool down, David crouched and took his sketch pad out of his backpack. With quick, sure lines, he made an accurate drawing of the rock.

55       Even as he was drawing, David could hardly believe he was looking at something that had been flying through space only a few minutes before. He wondered where the meteorite had come from. Maybe an asteroid or a comet had passed too close to a planet or the Sun, and a chunk of it had been pulled off by gravity. Maybe it had been floating through space for millions of years before Earth’s gravitational field had caught it and dragged it in.

60       David sat on the ground beside the Thinking Pond and watched as the water slowly refilled the hole. It was getting dark when he finally got up to head back home. He could faintly see the meteorite in the darkening water, which was still rising. When he’d come here tomorrow, the rock would be under ten feet of water, and he probably wouldn’t be able to see it at all.

65       As he walked home through the woods, David hoped that nobody would come looking for the meteorite. Probably no one knew that part of it had survived its fiery journey through the earth’s atmosphere. He hoped that the meteorite would stay at the bottom of the Thinking Pond forever, in a place where the earth, the water, and a piece of the sky all touched each other.

Which sentence from the passage **best** shows how powerful the meteorite was?

- A** “Suddenly, he heard a sharp, whining sound like the engine of a high-flying jet airplane.” (lines 25 and 26)
- B** “Then a ball of fire roared overhead, followed by a searing gust of wind.” (lines 27 and 28)
- C** “The shock wave knocked David to the ground, his ears ringing.” (line 29)
- D** “A second later, he heard an explosive, hissing crash up ahead.” (lines 29 and 30)

**Key: C**

**Measures CCSS RL.7.1**

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.7.1**

This question measures RL.7.1 because it asks the student to provide evidence to support an inference made about an event in the story. To answer this question correctly, students must consider the parts of the text that relate to the meteorite, identify which line or lines from the text depict the meteorite’s power, and correctly infer the line or lines that depict this power most effectively.

### **WHY CHOICE “C” IS CORRECT:**

Students who chose “C” show an understanding of the implication of the shock wave resulting from the meteorite’s impact, and how this impact is the most effective description of the meteor’s power. The student who selects this response has correctly understood how the details in sequence contribute to the impact of an event, and how these details convey a sense of power as it relates to the impact of the meteorite.

### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” understand that this statement reflects a key detail about the falling meteorite. However, as a detail it describes one aspect of the total impact of the meteorite that David experienced. A student who selects this response may be able to identify a moment in the course of an event but has not connected the details to form a coherent understanding of the impact of the event, and/or has not understood that it is the description of the physical impact of the meteorite hitting the ground that most effectively conveys its power.

**Choice B:** Students who choose “B” understand that this statement reflects another key detail about the effect of the meteorite as it passes through the atmosphere. However, as a detail it is one sequence in the total events that lead to the impact the meteorite has on David. The student who selects this response is able to identify an event leading to a climax but has not connected the details to form a coherent understanding of the impact of the event, and/or has not understood that it is the description of the physical impact of the meteorite hitting the ground that most effectively conveys its power.

**Choice D:** Students who choose “D” understand that this statement reflects an aftermath of the event. The event was the impact that knocked David to the ground. The student who selects this response is able to identify moments in the course of events but has not connected the details to form a coherent understanding of the impact of the event, and/or has not understood that it is the description of the physical impact of the meteorite hitting the ground that most effectively conveys its power.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.7.1:**

While choices “A,” “B,” and “D” are all plausible as being events related to the impact of meteorite and/or its impact, only “C” clearly describes physical impact of the meteorite hitting the ground. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students’ capacity to comprehend texts at grade-level complexity, and analyzing how inferences about a story are supported by specific details and sections of a text.

What does the meteorite event **mainly** represent to David?

- A** the wonder of nature
- B** the vastness of the universe
- C** the beauty of the landscape
- D** the violence of natural events

**Key: A**

**MEASURES CCLS RL.7.2:**

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.7.2:**

This item measures RL.7.2 because it asks students to determine a central idea in the passage. To answer this question correctly, students must identify how David perceives the event overall, which requires understanding of the text as a whole.

**WHY CHOICE “A” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “A” show an understanding of how the meteorite’s landing causes David to be “awe-struck” (line 39). This feeling goes beyond simply appreciating the beauty of nature as David can “hardly believe” what he just witnessed in this familiar environment (line 54). Students who choose “A” also express understanding of the meaning of “wonder” as a feeling of admiration for something unexpected.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice B:** Students who choose “B” demonstrate understanding of David’s wonderment at the meteorite, but may not understand how the meteorite causes David to gain a new perspective on nature in general. Students who choose “B” may focus too much on the meteorites origin, rather than the admiration he has of the way various parts of nature have come together.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” show understanding that David appreciates the woods and Thinking Pond’s serenity and natural beauty, but the meteorite’s crashing changes the landscape temporarily into “a dry, cracked-mud crater” (line 39), where “baked mud rippled out from the center in wide, shallow waves” (line 37). David is amazed not at the beauty of the meteorite, but at the way it transforms the scene.

**Choice D:** Students who choose “D” may not understand David’s reaction to the event. While the narrator does describe the destruction caused by the meteorite, David is amazed at this event and does not consider it violent.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.7.2:**

Choices “B” and “C” offer elements of how David perceives the meteorite’s dramatic landing, but “D” misinterprets David’s reaction to the event. Choice A provides the best description of how David considers the event overall. The incident of the meteorite embellishes the descriptions of David’s wonderment at squirrels and clouds at the beginning of the passage. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how the author uses specific words and details to establish an overall theme or idea.

What does the author mean by the phrase “a piece of the sky” in lines 68 and 69?

- A** a cloud reflected in the pond
- B** an asteroid half-buried in a muddy crater
- C** a comet orbiting the Earth
- D** a meteorite under the water

**Key: D**

#### **MEASURES CCLS RL.7.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.7.4:**

This question measures RL.7.4 because it asks students to determine the connotation of a phrase as it applies to the text. To answer correctly, students must consider each detail to determine if it accurately links the phrase with the submerged meteorite.

#### **WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” show an understanding of the connection of the meteorite as an object that comes from the space above Earth’s atmosphere and will reside now submerged under water.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” show an understanding of the detail in line 8, but may not understand the reference to “sky” as the part of space above Earth’s atmosphere and instead focuses on the slowly filling crater, which may reflect the sky above it.

**Choice B:** Students who choose “B” show understanding that the meteorite may have come from an asteroid and made a muddy crater. However, students may not have understood that it was the meteorite that made it to earth, nor that the crater filled up slowly with water.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” show understanding of David’s thought that the meteorite may have come from a comet, but may not understand that the phrase “a piece of the sky” speaks to the piece of meteorite in the pond rather than a comet still in orbit.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.7.4**

While choices “A,” “B,” and “C” all detail objects mentioned in the passage and related to the theme of the question, only “D” correctly makes the connection that the meteorite represents something from “the sky” and now will lay embedded in the bottom of the pond. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how authors use connotative language to express ideas in creative ways.

**DRAFT**

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Our Students. Their Moment.

**New York State Testing Program  
Grade 8 Common Core  
English Language Arts Test**

**Released Questions with Annotations**

**August 2013**



# Directions

208013P

Read this passage. Then answer questions XX through XX.

## Jason's Gold

by Will Hobbs

When the story broke on the streets of New York, it took off like a wildfire on a windy day.

"Gold!" Jason shouted at the top of his lungs. "Read all about it! Gold discovered in Alaska!"

- 5        The sturdy fifteen-year-old newsboy waving the paper in front of Grand Central Depot had arrived in New York only five days before, after nearly a year spent working his way across the continent.

"Gold ship arrives in Seattle!" Jason yelled. "EXTRA! EXTRA! Read all about it! Prospectors from Alaska. Two tons of gold!"

- 10       The headline, GOLD IN ALASKA, spanned the width of the entire page, the letters were so enormous.

People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet. He was selling the *New York Herald* hand over fist. His sack was emptying so fast, it was going to be only a matter of minutes before he was sold out.

- 15       "Prospectors from Alaska arrive in Seattle! Two tons of gold!"

- Jason wanted to shout, Seattle is where I'm from! but instead he repeated the cry "Gold ship arrives in Seattle," all the while burning with curiosity. Beyond the fact that the ship had arrived this very day—this momentous seventeenth of July, 1897—he knew nothing except what was in the headlines. He hadn't even had a chance to read the story yet.
- 20

It was unbelievable, all this pushing and shoving. A woman was giving a man a purse-beating over his head for knocking her aside. "Skip the change!" a man in a dark suit cried amid the crush, pressing a silver dollar into Jason's hand for the five-cent newspaper. "Just give me the paper!"

- 25       When there was only one left, Jason took off running with it like a dog with a prize bone. In the nearest alley, he threw himself down and began to devour the story.

*At six o'clock this morning a steamship sailed into Seattle harbor from Alaska with two tons of gold aboard. Five thousand people streamed from the streets of Seattle onto Schwabacher's Dock to meet the gold ship, the Portland.*

- 30       Five thousand people at Schwabacher's Dock! He knew Schwabacher's like the back of his hand. Mrs. Beal's rooming house was only six blocks away! Were his brothers,

Abraham and Ethan, among the five thousand? Maybe, but probably not. At that hour they would have been on their way to work at the sawmill. Would they have risked being fired for arriving late? He didn't think so. His older brothers were such cautious sorts.

35 Hurriedly, Jason read on:

*"Show us your gold!" shouted the crowd as the steamer nosed into the dock.*

*The prospectors thronging the bow obliged by holding up their riches in canvas and buckskin sacks, in jars, in a five-gallon milk can, all manner of satchels and suitcases. One of the sixty-eight, Frank Phiscator, yelled, "We've got millions!"*

40 Jason closed his eyes. He could picture this just as surely as if he were there. He'd only been gone for ten months. Suddenly he could even smell the salt water and hear the screaming of the gulls above the crowd. Imagine, he told himself, *millions in gold*. His eyes raced back to the newsprint:

45 *Another of the grizzled prospectors bellowed, "The Klondike is the richest goldfield in the world!"*

*"Hurrah for the Klondike!" the crowd cheered. "Ho for the Klondike!"*

*Klondike.* Jason paused to savor the word. "Klondike," he said aloud. The name had a magical ring to it, a spellbinding power. The word itself was heavy and solid and dazzling, like a bar of shiny gold.

50 *One of the newly rich disembarking the ship was a young man from Michigan who'd left a small farm two years before with almost nothing to his name. As he wrestled a suitcase weighing over two hundred pounds down the gangplank, the handle broke, to a roar from the crowd.*

It almost hurt reading this, it was so stupendous. Two hundred pounds of gold!

55 That man had left home with almost nothing to his name, Jason thought, just like I did. That could have been *me* if only I'd heard about Alaska ten months ago, when I first took off.... It could have been Jason Hawthorn dragging a fortune in gold off that ship.

Jason could imagine himself disembarking, spotting his brothers in the crowd, seeing the astonishment in their eyes...their sandy-haired little brother returning home, a conquering hero!

60 "Dreams of grandeur," he whispered self-mockingly, and found the spot where he'd left off:

65 *A nation unrecovered from the panic of '93 and four years of depression now casts its hopeful eyes upon Alaska. Today's events, in a lightning stroke, point north from Seattle toward that vast and ultimate frontier whose riches have only begun to be plumbed. It may well be that a gold rush to dwarf the great California rush of '49 may already be under way as these lines are penned, as untold numbers of argonauts, like modern Jasons, make ready to pursue their Golden Fleeces. Klondike or Bust!*

Based on the entire passage, what is the meaning of the word “momentous” in line 18?

- A** causes much happiness
- B** creates a great disturbance
- C** occurs simply by chance
- D** becomes historically important

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: L.8.4A:**

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

**a.** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES L.8.4A:**

The question measures L.8.4A because it asks students to determine the meaning of a word, including the nuances of its connotative meaning, using the context of the story. To answer the question correctly, students must determine the relationship between the word “momentous” and the story.

#### **WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” demonstrate the ability to determine the meaning of a word in a story using both contextual clues and a range of strategies, including analysis of word roots. A student may use an analysis of word roots: “moment” (“a point in time”) and “ous” (“full of” or “possessing”) to arrive at an understanding of “momentous” to mean a point in time that is full of meaning, importance, potential, emotion, change, or power. Students may also use contextual clues like “burning with curiosity,” “arrived that very day,” and the details provided by the author showing the excitement over the discovery of gold, to arrive at the idea that the definition of “momentous” has to do with “time,” and significance, importance, meaning, emotion, potential, change, power or other related ideas. By additionally comprehending the historical significance of the events of the plot (particularly clear in lines 63 through 68) and their relationship to the author’s word choice, students choosing “D” understand that the unfolding events have a larger consequence than what is immediately happening to the prospectors, newspaper readers, Jason, and others.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” may show a general understanding of the main event in the story: finding gold, as a happy occasion, evidenced primarily by the italicized accounts of gold-laden newly rich prospectors arriving to the awed onlookers in Seattle. However, students choosing this answer may not understand the connotation or nuances of the word which would take into account Jason’s conflicted emotions and the larger context of the discovery of gold as an event of broader historical significance.

**Choice B:** Students who choose “B” may show a general understanding of the word “momentous” as something causing much excitement and emotion by using context clues such as “People running toward him...,” “selling the New York Herald hand over fist,” Jason wanting to shout, and descriptions of the general commotion and excitement. However, the scope of “disturbance” does not accurately capture the connotation implied by the word “momentous,” nor does it connect the term to the historical nature of the passage. The connection to history and its importance is made clear in the final lines of the passage (lines 63 through 68) making option “D” the most accurate definition for “momentous” in the context of this story.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” may show an inaccurate interpretation of one aspect of the events of the story. Although some events of the story such as finding gold or the arrival of the ship that day have to some extent occurred by chance, they have not occurred “simply by chance,” nor would the arrival of a ship normally be described as a “chance” event. In addition, the story does not focus on any chance or random aspect of the day, but rather its importance.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER L.8.4A:**

Choices “A” and “B” are plausible for identifying an aspect of the story that may apply to the meaning of the word “momentous.” However, the aspects identified: “happiness,” “disturbance,” and “chance,” are too narrowly focused and fail to take into account the historical significance the author attaches to the meaning of “momentous” making option “D” the best choice. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how contextual details help a reader determine the meaning and connotation of specific words in a text, and deploying a range of strategies to determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases.

Read the sentence from line 12 of the passage.

**People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet.**

The author uses this simile to emphasize that the people

- A** were interested in the news about the gold
- B** were curious about the ship's arrival
- C** wanted to become gold prospectors
- D** were unable to resist reading about the gold

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.4:**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.4:**

The question measures RL.8.4 because it asks students to interpret figurative language and connotation in a text by showing understanding of the comparison made in a simile. To answer correctly, students must analyze the emotions and ideas of the passage's events to determine how the author uses simile to develop a specific detail or scene in the story.

**WHY CHOICE "D" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "D" show an understanding that the simile compares the way people were running toward Jason and the news in the papers he is selling with the way iron filings are attracted to a magnet. Iron filings are strongly and unquestionably attracted to magnets suggesting that the people were "unable to resist" moving toward Jason because their interest in the information in the newspapers he is selling is irresistible. Students who choose this answer distinguish its connotation by choosing "unable to resist" over the less accurate options ("were interested in," and "were curious about") presented in "A" and "B."

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose "A" may show some understanding of the simile and how it applies to the story, but do not demonstrate full comprehension of the connotation of the simile and how the author uses the simile for emphasis of a detail in the story. "Were interested in" shows an understanding of the idea of attraction expressed by the simile; however, this option does not express the degree of attraction implied by the strong and unequivocal way iron filings are attracted to magnets. "Were unable to resist" more accurately describes the particular connotation of the attraction being described in the simile than does "were interested."

**Choice B:** Students who choose "B" may show an understanding of the idea of attraction expressed in the simile, but do not demonstrate full comprehension of the connotation of the simile and how the author uses the simile for emphasis of a detail in the story. By describing the interest people had in the news about the discovery of gold as being like "iron filings to a magnet," the author is qualifying the attraction as strong and unequivocal. "Curious" does not express this attraction as accurately as "unable to resist." In addition, the topic of the peoples' attraction ("the ship's arrival") is not as accurate expression of what the people are interested in as "reading about the gold" is in option "D."

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” may show an understanding that the people, Jason in particular, are highly interested in gold prospecting, but this does not mean that they themselves wish to become gold prospectors. Students choosing this answer may misunderstand the emphasis intended by the simile, inaccurately inferring that the people were attracted to the news Jason is selling because the people wanted to become gold prospectors.

#### **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.4:**

Answer choices “A,” “B,” and “C” are all plausible for expressing the idea of attraction suggested by the simile; however, none of them express the degree of attraction and the connotation of the attraction as accurately as “D.” “Curious,” “interested,” and “wanting” can stand in for “filings to a magnet,” but not as accurately as “unable to resist” in choice “D.” “A,” “B,” and “C” also each name a component or related aspect of what the people were attracted to but not as precisely as the topic in “D.” “News about the gold,” “the ship’s arrival,” and “becoming gold prospectors,” are part of what the people are interested in or could be interested in, but “reading about the gold” in choice “D” most exactly expresses what the people are attracted to. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how authors use figurative language such as similes and metaphors to describe specific elements in a story.

Why does the author alternate between sharing information from the newspaper and showing Jason's response?

- A** to suggest why Jason misses his brothers
- B** to show Jason's feelings at the moment they occur
- C** to portray Jason's interest in reading
- D** to show why Jason might want to return home

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.6**

Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

#### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.6:**

This question measures RL.8.6 because it asks students to analyze why an author shifts points of view in a passage and how this affects the meaning of passage. To answer correctly, students must distinguish between various points of view including newspaper quotes, dialogue, and the author's voice which is used to express Jason's own thoughts and to describe the scene. Students then must determine that the effect of alternating points of view is to highlight Jason's feelings at the moment they occur.

#### **WHY CHOICE "B" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "B" show an understanding of the different points of view in the passage and the effect of shifting the point of view back and forth from the quoted sections of the newspaper to Jason's reactions in general. By alternating quotations of the newspaper story with Jason's feelings at the moment they occur, the author makes the passage more exciting, urgent, and immediate.

#### **WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose "A" may show an understanding that after two sections of the quoted newspaper, Jason thinks about his brothers in Seattle. In lines 31 through 34, Jason wonders if his brothers were present at the ship's arrival, decides that they were not, and recalls how their character differs from his. Lines 58 through 60 show Jason creating a hypothetical scenario and considering the reactions of his brothers. However, the details of his response do not make it apparent that he misses his brothers. Jason's thoughts on the newspaper article include information about other topics and feelings making the more general statement in choice "B" more accurate. Students choosing "A" may not understand that the author switches points of view to convey the erroneous inference that Jason misses his brothers. The author reveals Jason's overall feelings as they occur to create immediacy to his feelings.

**Choice C:** Students who choose "C" may show an understanding that Jason desires to read the newspaper, but may misinterpret the author's purpose for alternating the points of view. While the author shows that Jason is interested in reading, the purpose of alternating points of view is used to reveal his overall feelings. Students choosing this answer may not understand that its scope is limited, and may miss that "B" more accurately describes the author's use of this technique.

**Choice D:** Students who choose "D" may show an understanding that Jason imagines returning to Seattle, but may not understand that the choice is limited in its explanation as to why the author alternates points of view. Like in choice "C," the author uses a shift in narration to reveal a specific aspect of Jason's thoughts (in this case, his desire to return home), but the overall effect of this technique is to highlight Jason's thoughts and feelings in general throughout the story making "B" the more accurate choice.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.6:**

While choices "A," "C," and "D" are plausible for conveying a real or inferred (correctly or incorrectly) aspect of Jason's response to the newspaper, only choice "B" accurately describes how the author uses a shift in point of view to highlight Jason's feelings throughout the story. The author's technique makes Jason's response to the news more immediate and engaging. The explanations provided in "A," "C," and "D" all show conclusions about the content of the passage which may or may not be accurate or well-supported and/or the explanations are not ones that this particular technique would be effective at generating. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing the different ways authors use various points of view to create specific effects in a story's development and tone.



$$2(x - 3) = 2x + 5$$

$$2x - 6 = 2x + 5$$

$$2x = 2x + 5 + 6$$

$$2x - 2x = 5 + 6$$

$$0 = 11$$

Students may have also recognized after distributing the 2 to get the expression  $2x - 6 = 2x + 5$  that there is no value for the term  $2x$  such that when six is subtracted from it, it will equal the same value when five is added to it.

**Answer Choice D:** There are infinitely many solutions. This response reflects a misinterpretation of the solution to an equation in the form of  $a = b$ . The student may have simplified the equation to get  $0 = 11$  but then incorrectly interpreted that there are infinitely many solutions to this equation. A student who selects this response may be able to apply the properties of operations to solve linear equations, but not understand how to interpret the solution.

Answer options A, B, and D are plausible but incorrect. They represent common student errors made when successively transforming a linear equation into simpler forms, until an equivalent equation of the form  $x = a$ ,  $a = a$ , or  $a = b$  results (where  $a$  and  $b$  are different numbers). Answer option C represents the correct process used to determine the solution to a linear equation whose simplest form is in the form of  $a = b$  (where  $a$  and  $b$  are different numbers).